

THAT WAS THE MONTH THAT WAS

News both local and international that you may have
missed

The Vernier Society September 2015

All courtesy of Manufacturers Monthly unless stated

Toyota looks to bring artificial intelligence to driverless cars

- Toyota will invest \$US50 million (\$A71m) in intelligent vehicle and mobility technologies and establish research centres at Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- “Key program areas for the two university campuses and Toyota, will be targeted at improving the ability of intelligent vehicle technologies to recognize objects around the vehicle in diverse environments, provide elevated judgment of surrounding conditions, and safely collaborate with vehicle occupants, other vehicles, and pedestrians.

- Manufacturers Monthly

Official reports confirms Vernier's 2014 findings.

- One reason Australia has difficulty capitalising on its public investment in research is the insufficient transfer of knowledge between researchers and business.
- • Australia ranks 29th and 30th out of 30 OECD countries on the proportion of large businesses and small to medium enterprises (SMEs) collaborating with higher education and public research institutions on innovation.

Global Innovation Index for 2014 from Insead Institute

- Global Innovation index places Australia 17th ranking on innovation
- but 81st on innovation efficiency – that is translating input to output
- only 30 per cent of Australia's researchers work in the private sector, compared to 80% in USA and an OECD average of 60%.

- Manufacturers Monthly

Wastech adds Tieman Tail Lifts to acquisition

Hallam based company Wastech has completed a Sale Agreement to acquire the Tieman Tail Lift business.

The Service and Tail Lift businesses will run under the Wastech Field Service umbrella, and will retain the existing Tieman Service staff, technicians, national fleet and the Tail Lift sales team.

Wastech expects the acquisition to provide “further enhancement of our customer service experience through the combination of the established Wastech Service Fleet and the Tieman Service business”.

- Manufacturers Monthly

Ronson's New Machine Gives Greater Capability For Global Aerospace

- In its continuing commitment to the global aerospace industry, Ronson Gears have acquired a Swiss made Studer S145 CNC universal grinding machine. . The renowned S145 grinder can perform ID and OD grinding utilising its C axis for one operation grinding, and form and thread grinding.
- This machine will enable Ronson to improve customer delivery performance through increased efficiencies in workflow performance
- The modular machine structures, the modern control and programming techniques, plus the latest grinding technologies guarantee high productivity and production quality.

• Ronson website issue

New organisation to help car component makers

- The Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association (AAAA) has formed a body to promote the local automotive components manufacturing sector by focusing on innovation and export expansion.
- The Automotive Products Manufacturers and Exporters Council (APMEC) will endeavour to assist member companies engaged in producing automotive products for both the original equipment and aftermarket sectors.
- “APMEC will conduct research to identify and quantify business opportunities for Australian component manufacturers. It will also go the next step to formulate new and innovative ways for members to expand their businesses.”

99 Melbourne shipbuilding workers lose their jobs

- Williamstown ship yards of Melbourne shipbuilder BAE released 99 people retaining a workforce of 500 but it is expected more will follow.
- Victorian Industry Minister Lily D'Ambrosio blamed the Federal Government for the job losses and claimed they could have been prevented by awarding BAE Systems a contract for the navy's new offshore patrol vessels.
- "They haven't lost their jobs because they're not highly skilled," D'Ambrosio said. "They have lost their jobs because Tony Abbott has let them down."

Technical skills not enough

- Manufacturing is increasingly becoming a high-tech industry with strong technical skills vital for the operation of some very sophisticated facilities in Australia.
- However, other more softer skills are also required as manufacturing moves into a new era.
- Bob Paton, CEO of Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA), says that while it is important manufacturers keep their workforces' skills up to date, it is equally important the workforce has training in softer skills around lean manufacturing, good management and leadership skills.
- "These skills will develop and mature a workforce so they can face the future and the challenges that will come out of that.
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- Rather than trying to recruit new skilled people, Paton says the investment in existing workers is far more effective and efficient.
- "Bringing an existing workforce along into the future is the key.

Import duties hold back high-tech companies

- High-tech manufacturers are being hamstrung by Australia's high import costs, according to research by global accountancy network UHY.
- The AFR reports UHY found Australia's import duties compared to GDP to be 0.46 per cent. This compared poorly to the EU's main economies (0.13 per cent), the US (0.19 per cent) and Canada (0.21 per cent).
- UHY say it was a handbrake on an area that could be generating significant wealth in the Australian economy as revenues from mining decrease.
- Technologically sophisticated manufacturing businesses import a great deal of their components, as Australia lacked a critical mass to supply such companies, "We just don't have the capacity to make the high-level inputs,"

Boral sues CFMEU over black ban

- Building products group Boral is suing the CFMEU for \$20.7m over a black ban the union ran in 2013 and 2014. The company is seeking damages for losses from 16 projects as well as loss in market share and reduced profits caused by discounts they had to make to try to win business.
- The black ban arose from Boral had continued to supply concrete to Grocon, a construction company the union was in conflict with.
- Boral's lawyer said customers had told Boral staff they would prefer to buy their concrete from another supplier than put up with delays the union had threatened.
- Boral is seeking damages for losses up to 2018.
- CFMEU, lawyer said this was "an attempt to perfect the market in its favour". "The position Boral was in before 2013 was at the mercy of natural forces, it had to compete in a difficult market,"

Small business confidence on the rise

- Small business confidence increased significantly in August following a pre-budget drop, according to the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Small Business Index.
- The August Index recorded an increase of 20.1 per cent to 129.9 points, up from 108.2 points in May. This is the highest level since the index was launched.
- The Index, which measures the confidence, current performance and future plans of the Australian small business sector, has increased 16.6 per cent over the past 12 months, indicating a significant boost in current business activity and expectations of future business performance.

Appen at forefront of machine intelligence

- ASX listed company Appen are making the most of the digital revolution. It does not make hardware or software but its technology is at the heart of the Internet.
- “They provide data that help machines learn”
- The company recently posted a 28% increase in profits with expected annual revenues of Aus\$70m.
- Appen’s team of linguists and analysts improve search engine technology

• Australian 9/09

VC's aim for the stars with 'Frontier tech'

- Start ups exploring drones, space, augmented reality and virtual reality are the next wave of innovation if venture capitalists are anything to go by writes the 'Australian'.
- "Frontier Technology" has already raised \$US2.17b in the first half of 2015.
- Google, Qualcomm and Intel rank as the 3 most active investors in this industry.

- Australian 09/09